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A Note on the Robert Schuhmann  
Collection of Eighteenth  
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*A Note on  
The Robert Schumann  
Collection  
of  
Eighteenth Century  
French Books*





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Eighteenth Century French  
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By  
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*Guide de l'Amateur de Livres à Gravure  
du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*



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*The  
Robert Schuhmann Collection  
of  
French  
Eighteenth Century Books*

THE Robert Schuhmann collection of French Eighteenth Century books, brought to the United States a few days ago, is the most generally attractive and pleasing library ever offered to American bibliophiles. Both in Europe and in this country the graceful and refined art of Madame de Pompadour and Queen Marie Antoinette is at the height of favour. Never have the paintings of Boucher and Fragonard, the furniture of Oeben and Riesener, the bronzes of Caffieri and Gouthière, the marbles of Pigalle and Houdon, been more ardently coveted by collectors. Here is a complete library of the most beautiful books of the period, all in the choicest condition and in the handsomest bindings, many from celebrated old collections and containing over five hundred original drawings by the great masters of the time.

The Schuhmann books are to me old friends. I well remember, some twenty-five years ago, when Schuhmann, who already owned some fine modern volumes, bought his first old book, an indifferent copy of the *Fermiers Generaux* tales by La Fontaine, in a rather tawdry new binding. He little dreamt, and I little thought, that he would one day own the beautiful

### *The Robert Schuhmann Collection*

Janzé copy in old morocco with all the "rejected plates" and trial states, and even an original drawing by Eisen.

Gradually his library grew stronger. One day was added the stately Watteau in old morocco, probably the finest in existence. From the Daguin sale, came his unrivalled set of the *Collection Bleuett*, with all the etchings and *avant-lettres*. Later still were added his *Fables de La Fontaine* illustrated by Oudry, bound in citron morocco for Madame Sophie, the daughter of Louis XV; his great sets of original drawings, many from Lord Carnarvon's beautiful library. Last came some of the Montgermont books, in unequalled condition, and the gem of the whole Schuhmann library, Queen Marie Antoinette's own copy of Dorat's *Baisers*, the most celebrated book of the eighteenth century in the most desirable condition of binding and provenance.

Collectors all use as a handbook Cohen's *Guide de l'amateur de livres à gravures du dix-huitième siècle*, of which the sixth edition, revised and enlarged by myself, appeared in 1912. As a basis for my revision I could choose no better and fuller general collection of eighteenth century books than the Schuhmann library. A large number of his copies are quoted in the new Cohen with their full history and pedigree and readers will easily discover that in numerous cases the finest copy known (sometimes the only fine copy known) is in the Schuhmann collection, which thus takes place as the standard library of its kind.

## *of French Eighteenth Century Books*

A natural question for any book-collector to put will certainly be the following: "How does the Schuhmann library compare with the other celebrated collections of the world? Are there any greater libraries of French eighteenth century books? If so, how should they be listed by order of merit?"

A careful survey of the great European and American libraries and a painstaking valuation of the individual qualities of each one of them, leads to the following conclusion: there are four other great libraries of eighteenth century books, two in England and two in France, which in all justice can be compared with the Schuhmann library. For none of these four would it be fair to claim an evident superiority. The Ferdinand de Rothschild collection and Sir David Salomon's library, the first rich in old morocco bindings, the other so comprehensive and so complete for proof states of the engravings, both contain hardly any original drawings. The Roederer collection overflows with drawings, but the old morocco bindings are neither numerous nor particularly fine. Lastly the Beraldi collection, although of a unique quality, is much smaller in bulk than the Schuhmann library. The most punctilious critic will therefore, I think, agree with me, both that *no better collection of the kind is known to exist in Europe and that no private or public collection in the United States can compare a moment with it.*

The Schuhmann library contains *all* the important French eighteenth century books in the choicest

### *The Robert Schubmann Collection*

obtainable condition. The most exacting critics have not been able to point out more than two really desirable items which he had not succeeded in obtaining. With these two exceptions, the library is practically complete and shows what a remarkable collection could be made in Paris in our days with a quarter of a century to spare, a well-filled pocketbook, consummate taste and judgment, unlimited patience, the friendship of the whole of the book trade and the unfailing and continual assistance of an eminent Paris bookseller, considered by his many admirers to be quite at the head of his profession.

I have already referred to the beautiful condition of the Schubmann books. For French collectors, *condition* is the main quality of a volume and they are exacting in that respect to a degree unknown in America. The buyer of a Columbus letter or an Elizabethan Quarto is already quite satisfied if his book is complete and fairly clean. Not so the purchaser of the *Chansons de Laborde*. Of course the book must be perfect, with every leaf clean and fine and the impressions good and sharp; but more important still is the binding, which should be of the period and preferably of morocco; a book in old calf is worth twice as much as in modern levant, and old morocco is worth many times as much as old calf. Even in old morocco, there are grades of quality and a coat of arms or a dentelle border enhance tremendously the merits of a volume.

Some books, like the *Temple de Gnide* or the *Baisers*

## *of French Eighteenth Century Books*

*de Dorat*, are practically unobtainable in old morocco; some, like the works of Restif de la Bretonne, simply do not exist. Schuhmann made the best of his opportunities and we may rest assured that if some of his books are in modern bindings it is merely because *no good copy in old morocco* has turned up in France for the last quarter of a century.

He keenly appreciated bindings with royal and princely arms: the list of his armorial bindings comprises all the famous men and women of the century, the Kings and Queens of France, Queen Marie Antoinette, the whole of the Royal Family, the King's Mistresses, Madame de Pompadour and Madame Du Barry, and all the great Lords and Ladies of the day.

More recent owners include the most celebrated bibliophiles of the nineteenth century from Renouard to Robert Hoe, such as Count de La Bedoyère, Emmanuel Martin, Guyot de Villeneuve, Daguin, Lord Carnarvon, Vicomte de Janzé, Lebœuf de Montgermont and many others.

It has already been stated that the Schuhmann collection contains over five hundred original drawings by the most famous book illustrators of the eighteenth century: Eisen, Gravelot, Cochin, Marillier, Monnet, Borel, Moreau le Jeune, etc. Hardly any feature of the library will have a greater appeal to the American bibliophile.

French collectors have been so jealous of allowing these sets of drawings to leave Europe that not more than three or four of any importance have ever reached

### *The Robert Schubmann Collection*

this country, foremost being the Moreau drawings for Molière in the Pierpont Morgan Library, the Fragonard drawings for La Fontaine in the Schiff collection and the drawings for *La Pucelle* owned by Mr. Cortlandt F. Bishop.

Even in France they always have been extremely scarce and concentrated into three or four hands. The bulk of the extant drawings are in the libraries of Baroness James de Rothschild, Mr. Olry-Roederer, Mr. Henri Beraldi and in the Schuhmann collection. Outside of these four groups it would be difficult to quote any library containing more than one or two stray sets of these drawings.

Foremost among the series in the Schuhmann collection come the drawings by Gravelot for *Gerusalemme Liberata*, in a beautiful old binding, inlaid at the time in the book itself, a feature of the scarcest possible occurrence, but which is duplicated in the case of the Eisen drawings for the *Eloge de la Folie*, also in the old morocco binding.

The drawings by Moreau for the *Incas* are not numerous, but are the most beautiful examples obtainable of his earlier style, so brilliantly represented in America by Mr. Morgan's *Molière*. Moreau's later style is also fully illustrated, especially by the wonderfully finished set for *Télémaque*.

Cochin is at his best in the stately array of over eighty wonderful drawings for Tasso, half of which are unpublished and were never engraved. In 1784, the Comte de Provence, brother of King Louis XVI,

### *of French Eighteenth Century*

paid the artist *forty thousand livres* for these drawings, a price unheard of in those days of cheap living.

Borel's drawings for *Destouches* and Monnet's spirited designs for *La Pucelle* are likewise of the most brilliant quality.

Less known, even to specialists, but full of the daintiest wit, are the exquisite drawings for the various little volumes of the Bleuet collection, brought together by Robert Schuhmann at great difficulties and with the expenditure of considerable time and patience.

His last purchase was the admirable series of drawings for *Marmontel*, the gem of old Monsieur de Montgermont's collection, and which he refused to part with when he sold his library some ten years ago.

Nothing is more tedious than an enumeration and yet in what other way can an idea be conveyed of the true character of a library? If I gave way to my reminiscences I would in these few words gradually print a catalogue of the Schuhmann books, telling how he obtained his beautiful *Voltaire* in old morocco from the old Villoutreys family library near Angers, how his unequalled *Sergent* in red morocco was discovered in England, how he got out of the Beraldi collection his great *Molière*, one of two known copies in old morocco with the complete set of the *fleurons* and *avant-lettres*, including the beautiful portrait, how he spent many years in collecting his coloured views of Paris by Janinet and Le Campion, undoubtedly the finest of the three known existing sets, in what sale he bought his uncut Boucher *Molière*, and how

### *The Robert Schubmann Collection*

he had started collecting Cazin editions one by one, until one day he found his extraordinary set of over two hundred volumes, in uniform red morocco with the arms of a Bavarian princess.

The Schubmann library is not confined to eighteenth century books. The collector had also brought together a few hundred volumes of an earlier period, such as first editions of great French classics, about a hundred Elzevirs in the daintiest bindings ever met with, and a careful selection of beautiful bindings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including masterpieces by the Brothers Eve, a choice binding of Demetrio Canevari and one of the three or four extant bindings from the library of the great Connétable de Montmorency, not to speak of the equally scarce volume with the arms of Emperor Charles the Fifth.

Every one of these exquisite books will carry a message into the new home it will be called upon to adorn. It will testify to the exquisite taste of the talented artists who made the drawings and engraved the plates, to the inventive genius and technical skill of the craftsmen who designed and carried out the bindings, to the pious enthusiasm of the various bibliophiles who preserved them for our admiration and, last but not least, to the patience and judgment of the eminent collector who finally brought them together for the joy of our eyes and the glorification of everlasting beauty.

SEYMOUR DE RICCI







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